

Role of Regional Campus Attock, Allama Iqbal Open University in imparting teacher education through BEd / MEd workshops: A Survey based investigation

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Abstract

The article investigates the level of satisfaction of B.Ed and M.Ed workshop participants (students) using structured questionnaire method. The postgraduate workshops are held bi-annually (MEd) and annually (BEd.) all across Pakistan and are an integral part of Allama Iqbal Open University's distant learning programs. The present study is delimited to the data collected from students of tehsil Attock of regional campus Attock and further to the students of M.Ed and B.Ed. In order to avoid 'confirmatory predicament' the questionnaire was structured using five point Likert scale. The data was converted into percentage and each response was analyzed separately and the findings were tabulated on the basis of accept/reject ratio. The questionnaire sought information ranging from academic nurturing to physical environment and further to management issues. The objective of the study was to investigate not only the utility of workshops but also to judge the performance of newly established Attock regional campus. The findings indicate a higher level of satisfaction among the students regarding all three assessed aspects i.e. academic, administrative and environmental.

Key Words

Allama Iqbal Open University, Teacher Education, Quality Teachers, Workshops, Teaching Practice

Introduction

Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has a great role in educating those who could not get or complete their education due to certain reasons. In a country "where the news about education and literacy tends to be bad rather than good", AIOU's distance teacher education programs offer a ray of hope that how Pakistan's educational system can produce quality teachers. The AIOU, Islamabad, established in May 1974, was the first Distance Education University in Asia and second in the whole world. This was established under Act of Parliament and was named as People's Open University. This huge seat of learning was later renamed as Allama Iqbal Open University in 1977. It is one of the four Mega Universities of the world in terms of its enrolment catering the educational requirements of around 1.3 million students per year (AIOU website, 2014). It enables the students "to study at their own place, at their own pace and at their own convenience." (AIOU website ,Dr. Shahid Siddiqi, 2014). The university is unique in its "...philosophy, system, approach, functions and overall structure." (AIOU website, 2014). The university is providing education in multi-disciplinary fields from very basic to Ph. D level. AIOU is committed to provide educational facilities to the doorstep of each student. It executes its policies, programmes and educational needs through its regional network spread all over Pakistan. These

regions primarily provide 'student support and tutorial support services' to facilitate its clientele. In conformity with this resolve, a new regional campus Attock was established on 21 January 2013 becoming 37th regional office of AIOU at that time (AIOU , Registrar's Notification). Subsequently this new regional office got functional from Attock city in a rented building on 1 March 2013 when its office was shifted from Islamabad to Attock. Fully fledged independent functioning started w.e.f. tutors appointment of spring 2013 semester with allocation of separate budget. Now 42 regional centers / campuses are working in the nook and corner of Pakistan. AIOU Attock region was established after bifurcating Rawalpindi region into two parts i.e. Attock and Rawalpindi functioning separately. Attock region comprised of district Attock includes 06 Tehsils i.e. Attock, Fatehjang, Jand, Pindi Gheb, Hazru and Hassanabdal. The student population of Attock and adjoining areas was happy for now most of their problems would be solved locally and they would get a chance to better educate themselves in distance learning mode. With the establishment of separate regional campus at Attock, the participants of the workshops had had an opportunity to listen to and interact with scholars of their own area to whom they were familiar. Now, students have easy access to resource persons and other resources with the help of local regional office.

The B.Ed. and M.Ed. workshops organized during semester spring 2014 were 2nd and 3rd respectively of its kind arranged by Attock Regional Campus. In the workshops resource persons/tutors/supervisors from University of Education, Government Colleges, Higher Secondary Schools and High School at Attock and adjoining areas helped in the conduct of the workshop activities. In all 597 students of B.Ed. programme and 120 of M.Ed. programme were enrolled who participated in the workshops from tehsil Attock. For tehsil Attock, numbers of tutors / supervisors in B.Ed. workshop were 33 (11 tutors and 22 supervisors) who guided these students in 11 groups while 11 resource persons for M.Ed. workshop delivered lectures, provided knowledge and information and guided the students in 02 groups.

The workshops provided opportunity of learning to the distance learning students of AIOU. During these workshops the students at post graduate level had interactive sessions with different resource persons and B Ed students took guidance from senior teachers and learnt how to teach effectively in the class. They got hold of new techniques being used in teaching presently. Student-teachers participated and learned, "...how to plan the lessons, prepare audio-visual aids, set examination questions and observe lessons. In these workshops students were given guidance and counseling and watched demonstration lessons." (Orientation of Educationists, pp. 57 – 82, B.Ed Manual of Workshop, 2013). Suitably selected lectures and topics for the sessions were designed by the faculty to encourage a two way communication between the students and the resource persons. The workshops were also social gatherings where learners from different backgrounds and abilities shared their experiences.

Methodology

At the end of these workshops, a survey was conducted to obtain views of the students of 1st semester of M.Ed. course workshop and from students of last semester(2nd semester) of B. Ed. teaching practice practical workshop. The purpose of the survey was to get feedback from students to have an overall overview of workshops and the role of Regional Campus Attock in this regard. The objective was dual i.e. to judge the quality of services being provided by Attock region to its students in teacher education workshops and obtaining a general assessment of a newly established regional office as well. In this way, level of satisfaction of students in academic, administrative and environmental aspects were to be sought. A questionnaire was developed on 5 point Likert scale comprising of 11 items. There were also two open response questions. The data thus collected and analyzed. The study was descriptive in nature and data was collected through survey method. The simplest way was adopted to describe opinions by indicating percentage responses for each individual statement For percentage purposes, agree and strongly agree were taken as positive responses and the percentage value of these was thus combined in analysis.

Population and Sample

The target population of the study was the whole students i.e. 2669 admitted in teacher education programmes of B.Ed. (1932) and M.Ed.(737) at Regional Campus, Attock during spring 2014 semester . As the study was delimited to Tehsils Attock only, the sampled population was all the students of B.Ed. and M.Ed. of Tehsils Attock numbering 811 (B.Ed. 597 and M.Ed. 214). There were 13 groups (11 BEd and 02 MEd) of workshop and questionnaire was distributed randomly in all 13 groups among the students of B.Ed. (last semester) in their teaching practice workshop and among students of M.Ed. in their first semester course workshop on last day and was collected back within three hours. Number of participants who completed and returned the questionnaire was 274 (B.Ed. 189 and M.Ed. 84).

Data Analysis

Following is item wise data analysis:

Table 1: Overall workshop experience of participants:

	M. Ed.	B. Ed.
Partially Agree	14.28%	06.34%
Agree	63.09%	46.56%
Strongly agree	17.85%	46.56%
Disagree	03.57%	0.52%
No opinion	01.19%	--

80.9% M.Ed. students and 93% B.Ed. students agreed or strongly agreed to the statement that their overall experience of the workshop was satisfactory.

Table 2: Relevance of lectures to the syllabus:

	M. Ed.	B. Ed.
Partially Agree	13.09%	11.64%
Agree	42.85%	43.91%
Strongly agree	40.47%	41.26%
Disagree	03.57%	02.64%
No opinion	—	0.52%

83.32% M.Ed. students and 85.17% B.Ed. students agreed or strongly agreed to the statement that their workshop lectures were relevant to their syllabus.

Table 3: Provision of guidance and resources by AIOU Attock Region.

	M. Ed.	B. Ed.
Partially Agree	16.66%	13.75%
Agree	54.76%	44.97%
Strongly agree	22.61%	35.44%
Disagree	03.57%	04.23%
No opinion	02.38%	01.58%

77.73% M.Ed. students and 80.41 % B.Ed. students agreed or strongly agreed to the statement that Regional Campus Attock of AIOU provides guidance and resources to students.

Table 4: Physical facilities of drinking water, fans, light and seating were adequately provided.

	M. Ed.	B. Ed.
Partially Agree	28.57%	17.46%
Agree	13.09%	41.79%
Strongly agree	02.38%	09.52%
Disagree	54.76%	28.04%
No opinion	01.19%	03.17%

15.47% M.Ed. students and 51.31% B.Ed. students agreed or strongly agreed to the statement that provision of physical facilities (water, fans, light, and seating) was appropriate.

Table 5: Students were enthusiastic in participating in the workshops.

	M. Ed.	B. Ed.
Partially Agree	27.38%	08.99%
Agree	54.76%	57.67%

Strongly agree	05.95%	30.68%
Disagree	09.5%	01.05%
No opinion	02.38%	01.58%

60.71% M.Ed. students and 88.35% B.Ed. students agreed or strongly agreed to the statement that student display their interest and aptitude towards improving their professional development, knowledge and skills during workshops.

Table 6: The critical thinking of the workshop participants improved

	M. Ed.	B. Ed.
Partially Agree	17.85%	8.99%
Agree	61.90%	55.55%
Strongly agree	11.90%	31.74%
Disagree	04.76%	02.64%
No opinion	03.57%	01.05%

73.80% M.Ed. students and 87.29% B.Ed. students agreed or strongly agreed to the statement that their cognitive level and critical thinking developed as a result of learning activities during workshops.

Table 7: The workshop participants were facilitated in appointment of tutors, matters related to examinations and related issues.

	M. Ed.	B. Ed.
Partially Agree	16.66%	08.99%
Agree	60.71%	50.79%
Strongly agree	16.66%	34.39%
Disagree	04.76%	04.76%
No opinion	01.19%	01.05%

77.37% M.Ed. students and 85.18% B.Ed. students agreed or strongly agreed to the statement that students were facilitated with respect to their assignments, appointment of tutors, taking examination and solution of queries and correction of errors.

Table 8: With the establishment of Regional Campus, Attock, students' academic problems with the AIOU have been minimized

	M. Ed.	B. Ed.
Partially Agree	1.05 %	11.11%
Agree	59.52%	60.84%
Strongly agree	26.18%	21.16%
Disagree	10.71%	06.87%
No opinion	02.38%	-

85.7 % M.Ed. students and 82 % B.Ed. students agreed or strongly agreed to the statement that with the establishment of Regional Campus Attock, students' academic problems particularly relevant to workshops are being minimized.

Table 9: The efforts of Regional Campus Attock are satisfactory for providing information about schedule of study, instructional material, conducting workshops, tutorials and appointing qualified tutors and resource persons?

	M. Ed.	B. Ed.
Partially Agree	15.47%	10.58%
Agree	51.19%	52.38%
Strongly agree	27.38%	33.33%
Disagree	05.95%	02.64%
No opinion	--	01.05%

78.57% M.Ed. students and 85.66% B.Ed. students agreed or strongly agreed to the statement that the efforts of Regional Campus Attock are satisfactory for providing timely information about schedule of study, instructional material, conducting workshops, tutorials and appointing qualified tutors and resource persons.

Table 10: The quality of instruction during the workshops was appropriate.

	M. Ed.	B. Ed.
Partially Agree	11.90%	11.64%
Agree	63.09%	52.91%
Strongly agree	17.85%	31.74%
Disagree	05.95%	01.58%
No opinion	01.19%	02.11%

80.94% M.Ed. students and 84.65% B.Ed. students agreed or strongly agreed to the statement that the quality of professional education (B. Ed. M.Ed.) provided to students is satisfactory.

Table 11: Students were facilitated in their self-directed study

	M. Ed.	B. Ed.
Partially Agree	14.28%	08.99%
Agree	55.95%	60.84%
Strongly agree	20.21%	24.86%
Disagree	09.5%	0.52%
No opinion	--	04.76%

76.16% M.Ed. students and 85.70% B.Ed. students agreed or strongly agreed to the statement that students are being facilitated for their independent self-directed study

Analysis of open response questions

There were two free response questions which were asked so that the respondents could give independent opinion which broadly focused on the 'useful elements' of workshop and suggestions for improvements.

Q. No. 13: The most useful element of the workshop?

M. ED. Students

A Large number of students were of the opinion that they were satisfied with the performance of resource persons. The students were encouraged to share their views with teachers to improve communication skills and mutual interaction. The students appreciated lectures on Educational Psychology in particular. The discussion about class management was also quite useful. The students found resource persons cooperative, who were helpful in solving queries of students. This feature made learning experience similar to formal classroom experiences.

B.ED. Students

Maximum students were satisfied with their workshops experience. They found teaching practice quite useful because it developed confidence among students. The students opined that their teachers and resource persons were helpful. Due to their workshop experience, the students learned the best methods and techniques of teaching. They learned lesson planning and the methods of presentations. In this way, they got knowledge and improved their skills. The students found learning atmosphere pleasant. They were encouraged to speak and learn how to control classes. They learned how to use AV aids, flash cards and pictures etc. The role of tutors/supervisors was effective. Group discussion helped students in solving their educational problems. The students learned how to use black board and white board effectively and how to discipline a class.

Q. No.14: Any other comments and suggestion for improvement?

M.ED. Students

Students were of the opinion that teachers should be relevant to topics. Resource persons should come with proper preparation of their lectures. The needs of the students must be given special attention. There was need for improvement of physical environment. Some of the students also observed lectures boring and irrelevant . Few opined that more experienced and highly qualified teachers should be engaged. They faced electricity problems, lack of cold drinking water and wash room issues. Few said that duration of time for workshops was too long. As a result, a lot of time was wasted in useless discussion. So it must be shortened. Time should be reduced by not giving any break to students. They suggested that suitable arrangements should be made to provide comfortable furniture like desks, chairs and generators to overcome power load shedding. Time duration for workshop should be between 2:00 pm and 6:00pm and it should be closed before *sunset*. Some of the students opined that topics of lectures should be given to students well before start of workshop. Some suggested that topics of workshop should be part of study material and it should be provided with the books. Issues of government schools/institutions should be discussed instead of the discussion about international issues. The university must provide additional facilities like provision of multimedia at workshop venues. In time provision of books was also main area of concern of students.

B.ED. Students

Number of students were of the opinion that date sheets, books and tutors' letters should be provided in time. Water and light problems should be solved and proper wash room facility should be given. Class

size should be small so that students may get individual attention. White boards/green board should be provided during workshops. Time period of workshop should be decreased. A place should be provided for female students to offer prayers. Few students suggested that students should be given more teaching practice. The Teachers should be highly qualified, and experienced and trained. Modern methods and multimedia should be used especially during final lesson. The students find it difficult to collect pictures so they suggested to minimizing the ratio of pasting pictures and models because it was difficult to manage. Class size should be reduced. Teaching practice should be enhanced. Transport facilities should be provided to those who come from remote areas.

Conclusion

Since the objective of the study was to investigate not only the utility of workshops but also to judge the performance of recently established regional campus at Attock. The findings indicate a higher level of satisfaction among the students regarding all three assessed aspects i.e. academic, administrative and environmental. Mostly the students were satisfied with the establishment of a new office nearby their living places. They were almost satisfied with academic and administrative facilities provide to them during workshops but most of the people has shown strong reservation about provision of lights, water, bath and sitting facilities. This area requires further improvement and steps to improve deficient areas. Attention is needed in service provision and timely redressal of student problems. After carrying out this research, the authors further suggest to expand area of research with inclusion of all tehsils so that more fruitful steps would be taken.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: (Optional) _____

Level: _____

Roll No: (Optional) _____

Region: _____

ATTOCK

Tick (✓) relevant option you feel more appropriate to your actual experience.

- Q. 1. Your overall workshop experience is satisfactory?
(a) Partially Agree (b) Agree (c) Strongly Agree (d) Disagree (e) No opinion
- Q. 2. The workshop lectures are relevant to your syllabus?
(a) Partially Agree (b) Agree (c) Strongly Agree (d) Disagree (e) No opinion
- Q. 3. Regional Campus Attock of AIOU provides guidance and resources to students?
(a) Partially Agree (b) Agree (c) Strongly Agree (d) Disagree (e) No opinion
- Q. 4. Provision of physical facilities (water, fans, furniture and light) was appropriate?
(a) Partially Agree (b) Agree (c) Strongly Agree (d) Disagree (e) No opinion
- Q. 5. Students display their interest and aptitude towards improving their personality development, knowledge and skills during workshops?
(a) Partially Agree (b) Agree (c) Strongly Agree (d) Disagree (e) No opinion
- Q. 6. Your cognitive level and critical thinking develop as a result of learning activities during workshop?
(a) Partially Agree (b) Agree (c) Strongly Agree (d) Disagree (e) No opinion
- Q. 7. Students are facilitated with respect to their assignments, appointment of tutors, taking examination and solution of queries and correction of errors?
(a) Partially Agree (b) Agree (c) Strongly Agree (d) Disagree (e) No opinion
- Q. 8. With the establishment of Regional Campus Attock, students' academic problems particularly relevant to workshops are being minimized?
(a) Partially Agree (b) Agree (c) Strongly Agree (d) Disagree (e) No opinion

Q. 9. The efforts of Regional Campus Attock are satisfactory for providing timely information about schedule of study and instructional material, conducting workshops, tutorials and appointing qualified tutors and resource persons?

(a) Partially Agree (b) Agree (c) Strongly Agree (d) Disagree (e) No opinion

Q. 10. The quality of professional education (B.Ed., M.Ed.) provided to students is satisfactory?

(a) Partially Agree (b) Agree (c) Strongly Agree (d) Disagree (e) No opinion

Q. 11. Students are being facilitated for their independent self-directed study?

(a) Partially Agree (b) Agree (c) Strongly Agree (d) Disagree (e) No opinion

Q. No. 12: The most useful element of the workshop?

Q. No.13: Any other comments and suggestion for improvement?

(DR MALIK TAUQIR AHMAD KHAN) October 2014

Annexure B

ALLAMA IQBAL OPEN UNIVERSITY

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ATTOCK

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<u>M.E.d. WORKSHOP SEMESTER</u> <u>SPRING 2014</u> <u>REGION DETAIL</u> →		
<u>TEHSIL ATTOCK DETAIL</u> ↓		
Tehsil Attock (Student wise)	214	
Workshop Groups	02	
Workshop Coordinators	02	
Resource Persons	11	
Sr. No.	M.Ed. Workshop Enrollment (Student wise)	737
01.	Tehsil Jand	149
02.	Tehsil FatehJang	148
03.	Tehsil PindiGheb	112
04.	Tehsil Hazro	87
05.	Tehsil Hassanabdal	27
06.	Total Workshop Centre	06
07.	Total Workshop Groups	07
08.	Total Workshop Coordinators	07
09.	Total Resource Persons	40

<u>B.Ed. WORKSHOP SEMESTER</u> <u>SPRING 2014</u> <u>REGION DETAIL</u> →		
<u>TEHSIL ATTOCK DETAIL</u> ↓		
Tehsil Attock (Student wise)	597	
Workshop Groups	11	
Tutors Appointed	11	
Supervisors	22	
Sr. No.	B.Ed. Workshop Enrollment (Student wise)	1932
01.	Tehsil Jand	343
02.	Tehsil FatehJang	330
03.	Tehsil PindiGheb	270
04.	Tehsil Hazro	212
05.	Tehsil Hassanabdal	180
06.	Total Workshop Centres	09
07.	Total Workshop Groups	37
08.	Total Tutors Appointed	37
09.	Supervisors	74